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The main task of a cavalry formation during an advance is to act as the echelon which exploits success with the aim of dividing and encircling the main enemy groups, to annihilate these piecemeal in co-operation with air force, tanks, mechanized and rifle formations.

This is laid down in the project for the Field Service Regulations, 1942, and is fully supported by the experience of two years of the Patriotic War. Cavalry was successfully used during advances by the Red Army particularly in the operational depth of the enemy to exploit success. Thus in the first phase of the Stalingrad operation of 1942 the 3rd. Guards Cavalry and the 4th. Tank Corps, together with the Mechanized Formations of the Stalingrad Front closed the circle around the German Group commanded by Von Paulus. In the second example, the thrust by the 7th. Cavalry Corps towards Volnykh-Urassov in January, 1943, led to the encirclement and capture of the whole Italian Corps of Alpini.

According to the experience of the Patriotic War the exploitation of success by mobile formations can be accomplished by:

- the capture of the second line of defence before the enemy can organize defence on it.
- the destruction of approaching reserves.
- with a decisive routing of the enemy groups by attacks from the flanks and the rear simultaneously with attacks by the troops from the front.
- the capture of positions and objects in the depth of the defence which might enable the enemy to continue resistance.

For the decisive fulfillment of such tasks cavalry formations of no less than a reinforced cavalry corps should be used, and, as war experience has shown, the development of the cavalry breakthrough should be utilized by the Front/Command in the direction of the main thrust, against the flanks and the rear of the main enemy groups.

Placing the cavalry under army command frequently resulted in the cavalry being utilized to fulfill army tasks, tied the cavalry to the slow speed of the rifle formations, often involved the cavalry in

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protracted battles for local defended lines, which reduced its manoeuvrability and denied its operational character etc. Thus, the 7th. Cavalry Corps, after successfully completing the Valyut-Urasovsk operation, was placed under command of the 3rd. Tank Army from the 2nd. of February, 1943 and was dispatched to support the left flank of that army during its advance to Kharkov. The corps, having its mobility limited, under constant attacks by enemy air force and tanks, operated only slowly for a period of two weeks and without achieving the desired operational results.

One of the most decisive moments of an offensive operation is the one of selecting the exact time and order of committing the cavalry into the breakthrough. The cavalry will move from the assembly areas, which are usually not closer than 40 - 50 km. from the front, in localities which have large natural camouflage, at night, or else under very heavy anti-air cover, and, at the last possible moment, the departure positions. These should be as close as possible to the breakthrough areas, and of such distance that they can be covered by a single move.

As experience has shown in many instances it is advisable to create cavalry-mechanized groups, particularly when action is foreseen in great depth of a heavily fortified enemy area where cavalry could not operate freely without close support by tanks.

Prior to leading <sup>a cavalry-</sup> ~~an attack~~ mechanized group into a breakthrough, it is not permissible to limit the attack by the all-arms formation to that sector only where the breakthrough is contemplated. Thus, in the November operation in 1942 on the western front where only the 20th. Army attacked while the neighbouring 31st. and 29th. Armies conducted minor local actions, the enemy was able to assess the direction of the main thrust and being free to move his reserves, was able to prevent the breakthrough and the employment of the cavalry mechanized groups. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a number of simultaneous strikes with sufficient strength in order not to disclose the area of the main thrust and the wasting-away of its strength.

A Cavalry-Mechanized Group, just as cavalry alone, should not leave

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its departure position until such time as the infantry has broken through the main enemy defences and can protect the flanks of the corridor which is to be used by the cavalry for the breakthrough. Otherwise, the cavalry or cavalry-mechanized group which is the echelon designated to exploit the success will become involved in combat in the enemy's tactical defence zone. Under these conditions it will suffer inevitable and heavy losses which will weaken its strength to fulfill its main task, and the cavalry - mechanized group will, in fact, be transformed from the echelon which is to exploit success to the second echelon of the army.

The main reason for the failure of the breakthrough of General Major Kryukov's cavalry - mechanized group described below was the fact that the group was utilized to break through the enemy's tactical defence. Furthermore, the cavalry-mechanized group was committed in segments (first the tanks and then the cavalry corps) without cooperation between them. At that, the command did not relieve the group from its subsequent task-action in the depth of the breakthrough to exploit success.

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General Situation (Sketch 22 - not included in translation - can be found on page 136 of the original) Starting in August in 1942 the armies of the right wing of the Western Front started an offensive with the objective of seizing the Rzhev-Cychevka area. By the end of September they stopped along the line Yur'yev, Tabakovo, Vasil'ki, Khlopov, Podmoser'ye, B.Trisel' and further to the south in the direction of St.Batashkovo. The Malinin Front, meanwhile, with parts of its forces, was fighting along the front Belyy, Irushchevo, Mostovaya, and Sukhoshchaya.

The Germans, having brought up strong reserves, organized a determined defence and repulsed all attempts by our troops to advance further. The Rzhev-Cychevsk enemy group was composed of the 197th., 246th., 110th., 253rd., 206th., 251st., 129th., 87th., 161st., 72nd., and 102nd. infantry divisions, the 14th. Motorized Division and the 1st., 2nd., and

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~~Cavalry Mechanized Group~~**3rd. Tank Divisions.**

In order to eliminate the Rzhev bulge in October, 1942, an operation by the right wing of the Western Front and of the left wing of the Leningrad Front was planned. According to the plan, the above-mentioned troops were to encircle the Rzhev enemy group, seize the town, and liberate the railway line Moscow-Veliki Luki. The offensive had been planned for October but on account of the heavy rainfall it was postponed until the frost came.

As a result of lack of camouflage discipline, the change of timing of the attack, the re-grouping and the preparation of our troops for the attack, it was discovered by the enemy who had sufficient time to bring up reserves, to do the necessary re-grouping, and to improve his defences. The enemy's re-grouping was started by moving the Tank Divisions into the reserve, and this was accomplished by the second half of November. By the 24th. of November the 78th. Infantry division from Vyaz'ma relieved the 5th. Tank Division. The units of the 1st. Tank Division were relieved by regiments of the 14th. Motorized Division. Similar exchange of troops was also done in other sectors of the front.

In the sector chosen for the breakthrough, in the area of Vaseliki and Ahlopen, the enemy constructed two defended lines. The forward line ran along the eastern approaches of the localities Vaseliki, Gredyakino, and further, in a southerly direction along the western shore of the river Vasusa. The second defended line ran 4 to 5 kms. behind it. (Sketch 23 - not included in the translation - can be found on page 138 of the original).

The first defended line consisted of a number of fortified positions with constructed obstacles between them. Particularly strongly fortified were the settlements Gredyakino, Zevalovka, Lyznochilna, Ahlopen, Podosinovka, Zhorebtsovo, and a number of others, which were considered the main fortified positions and the centres of battalion centres of resistance.

Along the whole length of the front the enemy had constructed

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between 10 to 15 earth and wood emplacements per square kilometre. Every 25 to 30 metres there had been constructed machine gun positions and fox holes for groups of riflemen. Behind the dugouts of the first line on the slopes of heights there had been constructed machine gun nests and dugouts for mortars, joined to the forward line by connecting trenches. Behind the second defence line and in the wood and earth pill boxes anti-tank guns were disposed; on the reverse slopes, mortar batteries were stationed.

The second defended zone ran along the line Mal. Petrakovo, Bol. and Mal. Zopotovo, Iodosinovka, Zherobtsovo. An extension of this position, along the north-eastern shore of the river Osuga, was noted. Information had been received that the SS Division "Velikaya Germaniya" and the relieved units of the 5th. Tank Division were stationed in the depth of the enemy's defence.

The enemy considered the Rzhev area as a base of operations for an offensive against Leningrad and Moscow at the junction of the Kalinin and Western Fronts and prepared it for continued resistance. He was well prepared for defence having in the Rzhev area eleven infantry, one motorized, and three tank divisions. Of these three infantry and two tank divisions were stationed in the sector in which the troops of the Western Front were preparing for a breakthrough.

General Considerations by the Command: According to the Western Front Commanders' decision, the main thrust was to be delivered by units of the 20th. Army in the general direction of Uredyokino and Katerlyushki. After the breakthrough of the tactical defence zone had been achieved, a cavalry-mechanized group was to be committed. This group, in cooperation with the armies of the left wing of the Kalinin Front was to play the decisive role in the encirclement and destruction of the Rzhev-Sychevsk enemy group.

In order to secure the success of the main thrust in the breakthrough sector, the 20th. Army was given a superiority of strength in men and materials of between two and three over the enemy. The outline of the front was, on the whole, favourable to an offensive of the

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of the armies of the left wing of the Malinin and the right wing of the Western Front, despite the strong enemy ~~defences~~ defences and of the, for an offensive, unfavourable terrain.

The 20th. Army delivered the main thrust with its right flank, with the task of breaking through the enemy's defences in the sector Vasel'm Gredyakino, Prudy, and to seize the first and second line of defence along the boundary Mal Petrokovo, Bol. and Mal. Kropotovo, Iodosinovka, Sherebtsovo. The army was further to advance west of the railway line Rzhev-Sychevka. During the first day of the operation it was necessary to transfer the cavalry mechanized group to the western shore of the river Vazuza.

On the second day the 326th., 42nd., 251st., and 247th. Rifle Divisions were to seize the line of the railway, after which the first three divisions were to change the direction of their advance to the north-west and the last to the south-west. By such a manoeuvre the troops were to create a corridor 15 to 18 km. wide through which the cavalry-mechanized group was to pass for the breakthrough.

As further tasks for the cavalry-mechanized group were foreseen (Sketch 24 - not included in the translation- can be found on page 120 of the original):

- the 6th. Tank Corps to deliver a concentrated blow in the direction of Sychevka and to seize this settled locality in cooperation with units of the 3th. Guards Rifle Corps which was attacking from the north-east.

- the 20th. Cavalry Division was to advance towards Audreyevskaya to prevent the bringing up of reserves and to pound the enemy units which were withdrawing from Sychevka.

Guards

The 2nd. Cavalry Corps (less the 20th Cavalry Division) was to advance towards Chertolino with the object of cutting the rail line Rzhev-Olonino, and further to cooperate with the advancing troops of the front in the destruction of the Rzhev enemy group.

It has to be noted that the assignments of the cavalry mechanized group subsequent to the Nashchekino - Lateryushki front, developed



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into three, widely-separated directions. This led to the disbursement of the strength of the cavalry-mechanized group.

The Plan of the Commander of the Cavalry-Mechanized Group: According to the directive No. 0305 of the 11th. of September, 1942, the command of the group was given to the commander of the 2nd. Cavalry Corps General Mayor Kryukov. Included in the group were: the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps composed of the 3rd. and 4th. Guards and 20 Cavalry Divisions, the 5 Separate Cavalry Artillery Battalions, the 2nd. Separate Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 151st. Mortar Regiment and the 6th. Tank Corps composed of the 200th., the 22nd., and the 100th. Tank Brigades, the 1st. Guards and the 6th. Motorized Rifle Brigade, and the 11th. Separate Guards Mortar Battalion.

The group had the following strength: 21,011 men; 16, 185 horses; 13, 906 rifles and carbines; 2, 667 submachine guns (PPSH and PPD's); 95 heavy machine guns; 33 anti-aircraft Machine Guns (D Sh 1); 384 anti-tank weapons; 226-50mm. Mortars; 71-82 mm. Mortars; 64 -120mm. Mortars; 48 - 45mm. anti-tank guns; 49 -76mm. divisional and regimental guns; 12 -37mm. anti-aircraft guns; 120 tanks.

For the beginning of the offensive by the 20th. Army, the commander of the cavalry-mechanized group decided to concentrate the units of his group in the area Kostino, Lukovniki, and to prepare to cross to the western shore of the river Vazuza (Sketch 25 - not included in the translation - can be found on page 141 of the original).

After the units of the 20th. Army had seized the boundary Mal. Petzokovo, Bol. and Mal. Kropotovo, Fodosinovka, Zherobtsovo, Iholn.Yonovka, Blagusha, Chupyatino, the whole group was to cross the river Vazuza and to concentrate in the following areas: the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division, with the 100th. Tank Brigade in Iholn, Bereznyyskiy, Vedernikovo; the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division with the 5th. Separate Cavalry Artillery Battalion in Gredyakino, Krynikovo, Mobyline; the 20th. Cavalry Division with the 22nd. Tank Brigade in Bobrovka and Iholn; the 200th. Tank Brigade with the 13th. Guards Cavalry Regiment in Arstovo.



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When the units of the 20th. Army advanced to the west beyond the railway Rshhev-Cychevka and after the creation of the corridor the cavalry-mechanized group was to enter the breakthrough area and concentrate in the area Nashchekino, Nikiforovka, and the woods east of these points.

The commander of the cavalry-mechanized group decided on three main routes of march: number 1 - through Shchekoldino, Lozhki, Millipovo, Sverlushino, to Kateryoushki. Number 2 - through Kryukovo, Arestovo, Mal. Iropotovo, Tarkino, Nikiti'ye to Podchasnaya. Number 3 - through Zhorebtsovo, Podosinovka, Pamel'nitsy, Aleksino to Loshaki. The support units of the front and of the 20th. Army prepared four crossings over the river Vazuza for the cavalry-mechanized group.

The group was given the following tasks:

- the 200th. Tank Brigade with the 13th. Guards Cavalry Regiment moving along route number 2, were to destroy any enemy units it met, to concentrate in the woods 2 km. west of Podchasnaya, and to protect the group from the west.
- the 3rd. Cavalry Division with the 100th. Tank Brigade (the right columns) moving along route number 1, having the tank brigade on its right flank, was to advance to the area Kateryushki, Kholnets, and to protect the group from the north.
- the 20th. Cavalry Division with the 22nd Tank Brigade on its left flank, was to move along route number 3, and to assemble in the area Loshaki, point 212.0, Nikiforovka, and to protect the group from the south-west and south.
- the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division, with the 5th. separate Cavalry artillery Battalion, moving as the 2nd. echelon behind the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division was to assemble in the area Podchasnaya, Kuryaty and to protect the group from the south.
- the 6th. Motorized Rifle Brigade, moving along route number 1, was to advance to the area Millipovo, Tarkino, there it was to assume the defensive, and to protect the group from the east. After this the formations of the group fulfilled the tasks assigned to them by the

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staff of the front.

The Commitment of the 6th. Tank Corps: At 0900 hours on the 25th. of November the artillery preparation for the attack was started. The fire was conducted by over twenty artillery regiments of the HQ Reserve (of heavy and medium calibre) and by all the divisional artillery. But because of the heavy snowfall observation of the result of the artillery bombardment was not satisfactory, as a result of which many of the enemy fire positions were not destroyed.

At 1100 hours the infantry started to attack, but the offensive developed slowly. Only in a few sectors was our infantry able to penetrate into the enemy zone. On the left flank an assault group of the 247th. Rifle Division was more or less successful. It was able to capture Zavalovka and Kuznechikha and advanced towards Kryukovo and Bobrovka.

When the front commander was informed of the success of the 247th. Rifle Division he decided to exploit the success by committing the 6th. Tank Corps in this sector, with the assignment of seizing Nov. Grinovka, Nikonovo, Arestovo, Pod'yablon'ka, and Bobrovka. All the cavalry divisions were to concentrate, by a night march, in the area Lukovinski, woods east of Karamzino, point 217.6, and prepare for action in the direction of Kuznechikha, Bol and Mal Kropotovo. After this the cavalry-mechanized group was to complete its previously-assigned tasks.

During the night and day of the 26th. of November, the <sup>2nd. Guards</sup> ~~6th. Tank~~ Cavalry Corps assembled in the areas shown in Sketch 26 (page 142 of the original).

During the first half of the 26th. of November, the 6th. Tank Corps crossed to the western shore of the river Vazusa in the area Zavalovka, Kuznechikha, and by 1200 hours, with a determined attack, seized Bobrovka, Nikonovo, Arestovo, Pod'yablon'ka, crossed the rail line Rahov-Cychevka and reached the area Sukh. Nikishkino.

The action of the 6th. Tank Corps was supported neither by the infantry of the 20th. Army nor by the units of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps. The Tank Corps advanced and achieved the breakthrough of the

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enemy's defences but suffered heavy losses (about 70 tanks), and reached the line of the railroad with only 45 to 50 tanks. The enemy exploiting the separation of the cavalry and the infantry from the tanks, re-occupied and prepared for the defence of the settlements Nikonov, Arrestovo, Mal. Iropotovo, and Podosinovka. Thus, the plan to commit the mobile groups into the breakthrough was not accomplished because of the following reasons:

- the poorly-organized artillery attack which left untouched a large number of fire positions on the breakthrough sector of the 20th. Army.

- insufficient cooperation between the arms during the offensive, the units of the 326th., 251st., and 42nd. Rifle Divisions lagged behind the barrage permitting the enemy to re-occupy the partially destroyed emplacements and to repulse the infantry attacks.

- the action of the tanks was not supported by the tanks nor infantry and did not fulfill the expectation of the exploitation of the success of the 247th. Rifle Division.

To summarize, the 6th. Tank Corps, having been committed to insure the breakthrough of the enemy's defences, although it fulfilled its assignment, this was achieved through the loss of about 70 tanks (about 60% of its fighting vehicles).

The Action of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps: The units of the 20th. Army occupied the following positions by the end of the 26th. of November (Sketch map 26 -see page 142 of the original).

The 326th. Rifle Division was unable to break through the forward enemy defence zone and remained in the departure positions east of Vasil'ki.

The 42nd. Rifle Division repeatedly attacked the northern defences of Gredyakino, and with separate groups it entered the settlement but these were destroyed by the enemy. By the end of the day the division occupied the western outskirts of the roads east of Gredyakino.

The 251st. Rifle Division, likewise, did not succeed during that day, all its attacks being repulsed by the enemy.

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The 247th. Rifle Division, having forced the river Vazuza, occupied Zevalovskiy and Povernuchikh and became involved in the battle for the southern outskirts of Pobydino, Kryukovo, Bobrovka, and Prudy.

The 331st. Rifle Division was not successful and remained in the line Pochora-Sel'tro, on the north-east shore of the river Vazuza.

The commander of the 2nd, Guards Cavalry Corps was given the assignment to cross to the western shore of the river Vazuza, to seize the line Bol. and Mal. Propotovo, Podosinovka, Zherebtsovo, and to advance to the west of the rail line Rzhev-Cychevka. The further assignment -- to operate in the enemy's rear -- remained untouched.

Having at his disposal two crossings over the river Vazuza the corps commander decided: the 20th. Cavalry Division was to cross to the western shore at Zevalovki, and then advance to Kryukovo, Mironovo,

Bol. and Mal. Propotovo; the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division to cross at Prudov and to advance towards Pod'yablon'ka, Arestovo, Podosinovka; the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division was to advance in the second echelon behind the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division.

By the end of the 26th. of November, the 20th. Cavalry Division ~~had~~ moved up to the crossings at Zevalovki which were occupied by the rear of the 6th. Tank Corps and of the 247th. Rifle Division. The Commander of the crossing, who was from the operational section of the staff of the 20th. Army, refused to allow the crossing until all the rear elements had been ferried across. As a result of this the 20th. Cavalry Division returned to Prudov and during the second half of the night 26/27 of November started to cross to the western shore of the river Vazuza. At first light on the 27th. of November, the division, already under heavy enemy artillery fire and mortar fire, started to move in its assigned direction.

At 0200 hours on the 27th. of November the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division started to move to the crossing at Prudov. But since this was being used by units of the 20th. Cavalry Division ~~and~~ the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division could not begin the crossing until first light.

The 4th. Guards Cavalry Division reached the crossing at Prudov

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with its leading regiment at 0615 hours on the 27th. of November, but since the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division had only just started to cross, the leading regiment of the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division concentrated in the woods west of Troitskoye.

Since the crossing at Prudov was used by the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division, the Corps Commander changed his plan. The main force of the 4th. Cavalry Division on the march from the area of Ignatovo, was re-routed to the crossing at Zevalovki.

Thus, the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps, having received an offensive assignment, did not succeed in accomplishing <sup>the</sup> ~~its~~ crossing over the river Vazusa during the night of the 26/27 of November. The responsible officer from the staff of the 20th. Army, who supervised the crossing, showed lack of understanding of the situation in that he continued in transferring to the western shore of the river the rear and transport elements while leaving on the eastern shore the units of the echelon which was to exploit success. It is also necessary to remark that the Commander of the Cavalry Corps did not show great foresight in that he disrupted the sequence in which the troops were to cross at Prudov.

At 0600 hours on the 27th. of November units of the 20th. Cavalry Division reached their assigned route and from the march became engaged in battle. During the day the division was able to seize Iryuovo and Anostovo. Further advance was stopped by enemy fire.

The 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division completing the crossing of the river Vazusa, started out in its assigned direction at 1100 hours on the 27th. of November and assumed the offensive. During the whole day none of the divisional units achieved any success. At 2200 hours the division, having suffered many casualties, reached the line east of Fedosinovka-Zhorehtsovo, from where, during the night, the units mounted several unsuccessful attacks on several points.

The 4th. Guards Cavalry Division did not participate in the battle on that day. Concentrating in the ravines in the area Fed'yablonska, Iuznechikha, the division suffered heavy losses from aerial attack and artillery and mortar fire.

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During the day enemy aircraft conducted over ten low level attacks. Subjected to bomber and machine gun attacks were the whole of the corps, the artillery positions, the horse convoys, the headquarters of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps, as well as the transport echelon of the 6th. Tank Corps and of the 8th. Guards Rifle Corps.

To summarize, the corps did not fulfil its combat assignment because of the delay in the crossing, the poorly-organized crossings and the commitment of the corps late and in segments.

It is also necessary to point out that before the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps reached the enemy defences the commander was incorrectly informed that the enemy was supposedly defeated and withdrawing and only covered by rearguards, where, in actual fact, the enemy defences had not been completely penetrated.

The reconnaissance of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps worked poorly and could not give the commander accurate information about the actual situation by the beginning of the offensive. As a result of this, the commander of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps, operating in the dark, chose for the situation the wrong method of attack from the march.

Units of the 20th. Cavalry and the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division entered the battle with insufficient fire preparation. Cooperation of the divisions and regiments was poorly organized.

The Breakthrough of the Units of the 20th. Cavalry and the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division to the Line of the Railway. By the end of the 27th. of November the enemy continued to hold the fortified positions Vasil'ki, Vedernikovo, Izhm. Rogachevskiy, Bol. and Mal. Aropotovo, Podosinovka, Zharebtsovo, Izhopen. His artillery and mortars fired continuously on our troops, and his air force was active.

The units of the 20th. Army occupied the following position: The 6th. Tank Corps, separated from the infantry and cavalry, was located in the woods north-west of Svkh. Nikishino; the 326th. Rifle Division advancing on Vasil'ki continued its unsuccessful attacks on the forward enemy defence line; the 251st. and 42nd. Rifle Divisions, after bitter combat, continued to attack and seized Gredyakino and were

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fighting for Kholm.Berezuyskiy, Veshernikovo, Kholm. Rogachevskiy.

Units of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps were assembled as follows: The 20th. Cavalry Division in the depression between Bol. and Mal. Propotovo and Arestovo; the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Corps in the depression north east of Podosinovka; the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division in the same area, was the corps reserve.

The front commander expressed his displeasure to the commander of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps about the slow movement of the corps, and demanded that the corps in the night of the 27/28 of November break through beyond the rail line, bypassing enemy centres of resistance.

Complying with the Front Commander's instructions the Corps Commander ordered the 20th. and 3rd. Guards Cavalry Divisions, to proceed, bypassing enemy centres of resistance, beyond the rail line and to establish contact with the 6th. Tank Corps in the area Nikishkino during the night 27/28 November. The 4th. Guards Cavalry Division was to be prepared to attack behind the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division.

In the first half of the night the 20th. Cavalry Division, having as its first echelon two cavalry regiments in extended order crossed the depression between Bol. and Mal. Propotovo, destroyed an enemy battery near point 204.6 and reached the railway, where it came under fire.

The 103rd. Cavalry Regiment, from the march <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ mounted, attacked enemy infantry and destroyed about a company, dispersed the remainder, and broke into Svkh. Nikishkino. The 124th. Cavalry Regiment fought for and seized Belokhvostovo.

The 22nd. Cavalry Regiment, having become separated from the first echelon, while crossing the depression between Bol. and Mal. Propotovo, was caught by rocket and projector fire, as well as by cross fire, suffered heavy losses, and had to withdraw to its departure position despite many attempts to break through.

The 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division was late in receiving the order for the breakthrough and when it started to move at first light it suffered heavy losses in men, horses, and material, by enemy fire in the narrow depression between Mal. Propotovo and Podosinovka. Only the 12th.

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Guards Cavalry Regiment and separate subunits of the 9th. and 14th. Guards Cavalry Regiments with the commander and headquarters of the division were able to break through beyond the railway.

The 10th. Guards Cavalry Regiment, following in the 2nd. echelon, became separated from the main force, fell under heavy fire from height 203.7, several times tried to break through in several directions and was, in the end, almost entirely surrounded and destroyed by cross fire in the area Lopotok, Sidorovo, Sof'yino, Yur'yevka (all points south of Zherebtsovo.).

After the units of the 20th. and 3rd. Guards Cavalry Divisions had advanced beyond the railroad Rzhev - Sychevka, the enemy brought up reserves, occupied <sup>point</sup> ~~height~~ 203.7, and with fire prevented all attempts by the other units of the divisions to break through to the west.

Thus, the task of completing the breakthrough fell on the 6th. Tank and the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps. The formations which were to be the echelon for the development of the success, for which a cavalry-mechanized group is best suited, through the course of events became the second echelon of the 20th. Army. This development occurred because the units were committed piecemeal.

The Commander of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps did not succeed in assigning the tasks for the breakthrough in the night 27/28 November and was unable to commit his units to battle simultaneously. The 20th. Cavalry Division received its orders in time and acted decisively. With two regiments it broke through between the defended points, but the third, becoming separated from the main force, suffered misfortune and heavy losses.

The 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division, receiving the orders for the breakthrough two hours later than the 20th. Cavalry Division, advanced against an enemy who had been forewarned and was on the alert. The division was caught in cross fire and suffered heavy losses, including its whole artillery and the whole 10th. Guards Cavalry Regiment.

As the consequence of this unwise attack the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps was split into two parts by the morning of the 28th. of November.

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Two regiments of the 20th. Cavalry Division and one and one half regiments of the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division were able to advance beyond the railway, while the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division and the remaining parts of the 3rd. Guards Cavalry and the 20th. Cavalry Divisions, suffering heavy losses, remained in their departure positions. Even though communications were maintained between these two groups, the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps and the whole cavalry mechanized group ceased to exist as a single entity.

The Attempts to Lead the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division into the Breakthrough : In the night of the 28/29 of November the commander of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps undertook to complete his original plan and to lead the remaining units of the corps through the narrow corridor between Mal. Propotovo and Podosinovka. However, when he was informed of the heavy losses suffered by the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division he decided to seize the enemy strong points in Mal. Propotovo and Podosinovka in order to widen the corridor for the passage of the remaining units. (Sketch 27 - not included in the translation - can be found on page 147 of the original.)

The Corps Commander summoned the commanders of the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division, of the 11th. and 16th. Guards Cavalry Regiments, to his commandpost (located 300 metres north west of Bobrovka) and gave them the following assignment: the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps with the forces of the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division together with the 247th. Rifle Division and the 1st. Guards Rifle Division were to seize Mal. Propotovo, Podosinovka, with the aim of leading all the remaining units and the rear services across the rail line station Osuga - Sychevka. The 4th. Guards Cavalry Division was to attack Mal. Propotovo at 0800 hours on the 29th. of November from the south and in coordinated action with the units of the 1st. Guards Rifle Division seize this fortified position.

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The 16th. Guards Cavalry Regiment was to attack Podosinovka in the night 28/29 November from the north and to seize it in joint action with units of the 247th. Rifle Division. After that the Corps Commander prepared to let the service units of the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division, of the 20th. Cavalry Division, of the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division, and the Corps Staff pass through to Sukh. Nikishkino.

During the night 28/29 November the units of the right flank of the 20th. Army continued to fight for the copses west and south-west of Gredyokino and west of Iholm Rogachevskiy. Divisions from the army reserve were committed in the centre. The 20th. Rifle Division deploying north east of Nikonovo and the 1st. Guards Rifle Division deploying south of Nikonovo, with the assignment of attacking Mal. Propotovo.

The 247th. Rifle Division after re-grouping deployed for an attack on Podosinovka, Zharebtsovo. The 8th. Guards Rifle Corps, having seized Iholm and Ihlepen, advanced towards Murzino.

At 0625 hours on the 29th. of November a 25 minute artillery preparation was fixed at Podosinovka and at 0650 hours the 16th. Guards Cavalry Regiment started to attack. The 11th. Guards Cavalry Regiment occupied its departure position by 0700 hours 500 metres south of Mal. Propotovo and supported by the fire of the 5th. Separate Cavalry-Artillery Battalion and the 4th. Guards Separate Cavalry-Artillery Battalion started to attack.

By that time the enemy had been able to bring up reserves as follows: into Mal. Propotovo the 115th. Infantry Regiment of the 78th. Infantry Division and tanks of the 5th. Tank Division, and into Podosinovka, units of the 337th. Infantry Division and of the 9th. Tank Division.

The 11th. and 16th. Guards Cavalry Regiments attacked several times during the 29th. of November but suffered heavy losses through fire from fortified points and emplacements and were forced to withdraw to their departure positions, having lost 490 men and 149 horses, killed and wounded. At the end of the day the 11th. Guards Cavalry Regiment was withdrawn and placed in reserve.

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Cavalry-Mechanized GroupThe Breakthrough by the Kursakov Group and the 6th. Tank Corps:

Colonel Kursakov, the commander of the 20th. Cavalry Division, having under his command units of the 20th. and 3rd. Guards Cavalry Divisions, breaking through beyond the railway line, sent the 103rd. Cavalry Regiment to attack Lozhki. The regiment seized this defended point and started to develop an attack against station Osuga, but being counter-attacked by infantry, an armoured train, and tanks, it was forced to withdraw to Sukh.Nikishkino. The remaining units of the group, establishing communication with units of the 6th. Tank Corps, consolidated and assumed an all-around defensive position in the area of the woods near point 215.8.

During the night to the 30th. of November the following decision was taken: the 20th. Cavalry Division was to seize station Osuga; the remnants of the 6th. Tank Corps were to attack Mal. and Bol. Propotovo from the west, to seize these fortified positions and to hold them until the arrival of the infantry of the 20th. Army from the front; the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps, together with units of the 1st. Guards Rifle Division, attacking from the front, and with units of the 6th. Tank Corps operating from the rear, were to seize Mal. Propotovo, Podosinovka, and further to complete its previously assigned tasks.

During the second half of the day the 6th. Tank Corps attacked Mal. Propotovo with determination. The enemy fled in panic towards Bol. Propotovo, and as the tanks ran out of gas, they were dug in for defence until the arrival of the infantry of the 20th. Army from the front.

The advance of the 1st. Guards Rifle Division was delayed. This was quickly exploited by the enemy who brought up a battalion with twenty tanks and mounted a counter attack from Bol. Propotovo to Mal. Propotovo. To support the remnants of the 6th. Tank Corps, the commander of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps despatched the 11th. Guards Cavalry Regiment. But the help arrived too late, just as the enemy, employing his superiority in men and equipment, was destroying the remnants of the 6th. Tank Corps. The remaining units of the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division unsuccessfully attacked Podosinovka several times during the day.

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Colonel Kursakov's group was given the assignment to attack Belokhmost and Sukh. Nikishkino from the rear on the morning of the 30th. of November, to secure the crossing of the railway line for the corps units. At 1200 hours the 103rd. and 124th. Cavalry Regiments supported by the artillery battalion, assumed the offensive, and after a bitter fight seized both settlements, destroying over 2000 enemy officers and men. At 1800 hours, the enemy, having brought up reserves, started to counter-attack, and in order to avoid encirclement, the 103rd. and 124th. Cavalry Regiments were again withdrawn into the woods.

The enemy occupied the woods near point 203.7, closing the last corridor through which Colonel Kursakov's group communicated with the remaining units of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps.

In the next five days, the remainder of the 20th. and 3rd. Guards Cavalry Divisions were incorporated into General. Major Dedeogl's group while the units of the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division continued the battle near Mal. Propotovo, Podosinovka, Zherebtsovo, but without success.

On the 5th. of December the Front Commander ordered the withdrawal of the remaining units of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps to the eastern shore of the river Vazuza so that they could be prepared to be committed into the breakthrough after the infantry had seized Bol. and Mal. Propotovo, Podosinovka, and Zherebtsovo.

The units of the 6th. Army assumed the defence along the line Bol. Bogachevskiy, Mikonovo, Arstovo and Shelpen. The units of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps did not conduct any further active operations.

Colonel Kursakov's group (the 103rd. and 124th. Cavalry Regiments of the 20th. Cavalry Division, the 12th. Guards Cavalry Regiment, subunits of the 9th. and 14th. Cavalry Regiments of the 3rd. Guards Cavalry Division, altogether about 900 sabres) became partisans. After spending over 35 days in the enemy's rear, travelling over 100 kms., destroying up to 3000 soldiers and officers, 8 airplanes, 20 tanks, 9 artillery batteries, 300 motor vehicles, 7 large equipment depots, this group on the 6th. of January, 1943, left the enemy-held area in the sector of the 12nd. Army of the Volinin Front.

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Summary and Conclusions : The second phase of the operation, despite the commitment on the 30th. of November of the fresh 1st. Guards and 20 Rifle Divisions, was as unsuccessful as the first. For the breakthrough of the defence zone in the area Mal. Propotovo, Podosinovka, there had been sent the last more or less undamaged division of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps. After that the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division again conducted a frontal attack in the same direction where previous unsuccessful attempts at a breakthrough had been tried by the infantry of the 20th. Army, the 6th. Tank Corps, and the main forces of the 2nd. Guards Cavalry Corps.

The attack of the 4th. Guards Cavalry Division with weak fire support and a quickly planned frontal attack by a dismounted cavalry division had only a small chance of success. Here, as well as previously, the coordination between the units attacking from the front (1st. Guards Rifle Division) with those attacking from the rear (remainder of the 6th. Tank Corps) was not organized and the units operated in disharmony. The 1st. Guards Rifle Division did not support the attack of the 6th. Tank Corps and its remnants, overcome by numerical superiority of the enemy, were, for the most part, destroyed in Mal. Propotovo and could not even disengage from the battle because of lack of fuel. The attack by Colonel Mursakov's group in the enemy's rear on Belokhvostov and Sukh. Nikishkino was also not coordinated with the action of the troops advancing from the front. The enemy bringing up reserves, drove back the 103rd. and 124th. Cavalry Regiments, and completely cut off the group from the main body of the corps.

It thus became obvious already on the 30th. of November that the seriously weakened cavalry-mechanized group was unable to achieve a breakthrough of the enemy defensive zone in the area of the railroad Rzhev-Sychevka or to advance beyond it.

To summarize, despite the superiority in men and equipment on the breakthrough sector the operations of the 20th. Army were not successful because of the unsatisfactory preparations and particularly on account of poor direction of the troops in the course of the offensive.

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The enemy, utilizing the many delays in the start of the operation because of insufficient camouflage, and the indecisive action of the units of the 20th. Army on the 25th. and 26th. of November, was able to bring up strong reserves and completely repulse our attack. Thus, on the 25th. of November, the enemy moved the 14th. Infantry Regiment of the 70th. Rifle Division into the area Kobylino Luznechikha, and the 13th. Motorized Regiment and the 116th. Artillery Regiment of the 5th. Tank Division into the area of Pod'yablonka. On the 27th. of November, units of the 337th. Infantry Division were moved up. On the 29th. of November, parts of the 102nd. Infantry Division were identified in Pod'osinovka. These had come from Rzhev. On the 30th. of November, units of the 9th. Tank Division which had been transferred from the Volkov sector were encountered in Mal. Potokovo and Podosinovka.

In the following days the movement of reserves to the breakthrough sector did not cease. On the 2nd. of December the 430th. Infantry Regiment of the 129th. Infantry Division arrived in Mal. Potrakovo from Rzhev, on the 4th. and 5th. of December, in the same area, there were identified composite battalions from the rear units of the 78th. and 120th. Infantry Divisions, the 33rd. Tank Regiment of the 2th. Tank Division and the 104th. Artillery Regiment of the 4th. Reserve. On the 11th. of December there arrived in Podosinovka <sup>the</sup> sector the 205th. Infantry Regiment of the 52nd. Cavalry Division from Zhizdrinsk and the 313th. Infantry Regiment of the 337th. Infantry Division from the Vyazma area. On the 13th. of December, at Podosinovka, units of the 2nd. Tank Division were identified and the 348th. Infantry Regiment and the 116th. Infantry Division were moved to Sherobtsovo from Zhizdrinsk. Thus the enemy, almost daily, brought large reserves forward which were able to repulse all the attacks by the units of the 20th. Army.

The particular reasons why the attempts to commit the cavalry-mechanized group into the breakthrough were not successful can be summarized as follows:

The thrust on the right wing of the western front was delivered on a narrow front. Strong supporting thrusts on the other sectors were not

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made. The offensive of the left wing of the Malinin Front was also unsuccessful. All this gave the enemy the opportunity to manoeuvre his reserves freely. The element of surprise was lost because of poor camouflage discipline, as a result of which the enemy had learned early of the preparation for an offensive and was able to bring up the necessary reserves.

The striking force of the 20th. Army did not break through the tactical enemy defence zone because of the poorly organized coordination of the activity of the infantry, artillery, and aircraft. The forward edge had not been ascertained exactly, as a result of which the artillery preparation did not destroy the enemy's system of fire. The units of the 20th. Army fought without decision. The offensive of the 20th. Army and the activity of the cavalry-mechanized group were not sufficiently supported by the air force.

It has to be remarked that the commitment of the cavalry-mechanized group when the infantry had only penetrated to a depth of 4 km. into the depth of the enemy's defences on a narrow front was not wise. The commitment of the cavalry-mechanized group before the breakthrough of the enemy's defences was assured led to significant losses. In the described action the Tank Corps lost about 60% of its establishment in the attempts to break through the enemy's defences, and the powerful cavalry-mechanized group was, in fact, worn out in unsuccessful attacks on the undamaged defences.

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